



Together, we can.

February 1, 2010

Dear Education Colleague,

South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming have been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to research improvements on how students are assessed in state testing and accountability systems. Our study will yield insight into developing improved, fairer tests of student achievement.

This grant, called OAASIS (Operationalizing Alternate Assessments for Science Inquiry Skills), will look at how state science tests are written for high school students. Current best practices advocate including all students, even those with disabilities, in rigorous, standards-based instruction as well as assessment that increases access without lowering expectations or altering the construct being measured. The OAASIS project is developing a pilot test consisting of enhanced items written to assess high school life science content. The results of the pilot testing will be used to improve how questions on tests are written to increase accuracy in student assessment results.

The pilot assessment will involve the participation of students statewide separated into three categories: students with disabilities who may be eligible for an Alternate Assessment based on Modified Achievement Standards (AA-MAS), students with disabilities who may not be eligible for an AA-MAS, and students without disabilities. All participating students must be enrolled in or must have completed a biology or life science course.

The design for the administration of the pilot assessment includes the use of both enhanced test items and non-enhanced test items. There will be four forms of the test. Each student will answer a total of 40 test items.

In addition to participating in the pilot assessment, these students will also be participating in a brief measure of reading ability. This will provide the researchers with information to assist in determining the effectiveness of the enhanced test items.

Please fill out the attached forms **ONLY** for those students who are likely to qualify to participate in the study as an AA-MAS eligible student. Special education teachers and other special education personnel who are knowledgeable of students' disabilities and academic performance are to fill out these forms. Students who are not considered part of the AA-MAS eligible group will participate in the study as part of one of the control groups.

Please review the attached information carefully. If you have any questions about the study or the attached form, please contact Joseph Bath at (803)734-3747 or jkbath@ed.sc.gov or Chris Harrison at (803)734-4430 or clharris@ed.sc.gov.

Thank you for your help with improving education and assessment for all students.

Sincerely,

Joseph Bath, Project Director
Office of Assessment

Chris Harrison, Project Coordinator
Office of Assessment

OAASIS STUDY PARTICIPATION DECISION CRITERIA

Instructions:

The attached form should be completed for students with disabilities who are likely to qualify to participate in the study as an AA-MAS eligible student.

To facilitate decision-making, both raters should address each of the 3 statements **for the specified content areas**. Each rater should check (✓) all that apply.

Rater 1 should be the student's special education teacher. Both raters should meet all of the following criteria.

- The raters have knowledge of the student's present levels of academic achievement and classroom performance in reference to the state's academic content standards and the state's assessment frameworks.
- The raters have working knowledge of the test format and which skills and knowledge are being measured by the statewide general education test.
- The raters are knowledgeable about state testing guidelines and the use of allowable testing accommodations.

When **both** raters agree that **all 3 of the statements** accurately characterize a student's current educational situation in the specified content areas, then the student is considered a member of the AA-MAS eligible group for this study. All decisions must be based on objective evidence, examples of which are listed on the back of this document.

Completed forms should be returned to:

South Carolina Department of Education
Attn: Chris Harrison
1429 Senate Street, Room 602
Columbia, SC 29201

Examples of Evidence to Support Participation Decisions

****Remember that reliable evidence must be *recent, relevant, and representative*.****

Participation Criteria	Possible Forms of Evidence
1. The student has an IEP with goals based on academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled in both reading and math. ¹	<p>a) Current IEP goal(s) and/or objective(s) statements that can be aligned to grade level content standards in reading, language arts, mathematics, or science; <u>or</u></p> <p>b) IEP statements that show instructional material or curricula containing grade level content; <u>or</u></p> <p>c) IEP team member statements that the IEP goals and instruction provided to the student align with grade level content standards</p>
2. The student's disability ² has precluded the student from achieving grade-level proficiency, as demonstrated by the student's performance on the state assessment or another assessment that can validly document academic achievement in both reading and math.	<p>a) Previous year's general education test results with performance documented at or near the lowest proficiency level; <u>or</u></p> <p>b) Results from a recent achievement test known to accurately predict summative test performance equivalent to the lowest level on the statewide general education test</p>
3. The student's progress in reading, math and science to date (a) in response to appropriate instruction ³ designed to address the student's individual needs and (b) based on multiple classroom and/or district assessments and diagnostics ⁴ is such that, even if significant growth occurs, the IEP team is reasonably certain that the student will not achieve grade-level proficiency within the year covered by the student's IEP.	<p>Written description of research based instruction programs used to improve achievement with:</p> <p>a) Review of past two year's class performance records and materials, (i.e. Report cards and IEP progress reports toward the grade level annual goals and/or objectives); <u>or</u></p> <p>b) Past three years of students' scores on state achievement tests; <u>or</u></p> <p>c) Multiple Curriculum Based Measurement scores and growth rates compared to grade level national or local norms and proficiency levels.</p>

OAASIS STUDY PARTICIPATION DECISION CRITERIA

Student: _____ **Age:** _____ **Date:** _____

Special Education Teacher: _____ **School:** _____

Rater 1

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Rater 2

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

<i>Participation Criteria</i>			
Rater		1	2
1. The student has an IEP with goals based on academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled in both reading and math. ¹			
2. The student's disability ² has precluded the student from achieving grade-level proficiency, as demonstrated by the student's performance on the state assessment or another assessment that can validly document academic achievement in both reading and math.			
3. The student's progress in reading, math and science to date (a) in response to appropriate instruction ³ designed to address the student's individual needs and (b) based on multiple classroom and/or district assessments and diagnostics ⁴ is such that, even if significant growth occurs, the IEP team is reasonably certain that the student will not achieve grade-level proficiency within the year covered by the student's IEP.			

¹ This criterion is based on the current federal regulations and will be required should a new assessment be developed for administration in the future. However, for purposes of the OAASIS study, consideration should be given for students working toward grade-level content standards whose IEPs may not currently reflect grade-level content standards.

² The student's difficulty with the general curriculum is due to his/her disabilities and not due to excessive absences, social, or cultural factors.

³ Appropriate instruction includes special education and related services.

⁴ Any measure used for this purpose must be valid and reliable for the subject being assessed.